

A Discussion Paper
on
Proposed Changes to the Implementation of
Forest-Use Restriction Orders

Prepared by
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B.C. Forest Service
Ministry of Forests and Lands

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INTRODUCTION

The Forest Protection Branch of the B.C. Forest Service (BCFS), Ministry of Forests and Lands, wishes to update the BCFS's methodology and implementation of Forest-Use Restriction Orders.

This process is necessary because of:

- public attitudes toward these orders; and
- their impact on the forest industry, tourism and the public.

Because the BCFS is committed to maintaining its goals and objectives in preventing forest fires caused by people, this discussion paper has been drafted to present a method to meet the challenges in fire prevention. BCFS seeks constructive input of all those who may be affected.

BACKGROUND

In recent years, Forest-Use Restriction Orders have been carried out under the following authority:

1. Campfire Restriction Order (Sec. 114, Forest Act)

This order:

- is not site specific and tends to give blanket coverage;
- does not provide exemptions, except for permanent campsite fire places;
- does not extract an acceptable response from the public and therefore reflects a poor image of the BCFS; and,
- accomplishes, in most cases, the BCFS's goals in fire prevention.

2. Restricted Industrial Order (Sec. 115, Forest Act, Fire Prevention Regulation):

This order:

- is based on the Fire Danger Class in a specific area;
- receives the full co-operation of forest companies, which frequently close down their operations ahead of regulation requirements;
- results in the removal of trained and equipped fire-fighting crews from forested areas, thus causing the loss of a fire-suppression force; and,
- does not stop recreationists from entering or remaining in the forests until a full recreational closure is imposed -- on the other hand, forest companies' crews are instructed to leave immediately.

3. Restricted Travel and Recreation Order (Sec. 115, Forest Act)

This order:

- tends to have a blanket application;
- requires a formal application and the Minister's approval;
- takes too long, at times, to implement or to rescind;
- requires cumbersome and expensive overall administration;
- results in major financial problems for tourist-related commercial ventures; and,
- has prompted severe criticisms from the forest industry and the public.

4. Complete Forest-Use Restriction Order (Sec. 115, Forest Act)

This order:

- is used only under abnormal fire severity situations;
- has, generally, a broad coverage and is not site specific;
- requires the Minister's approval and the support of the Tourism Minister;
- is extremely difficult and costly to enforce;
- is slow to implement and rescind;
- can create drastic economic hardships for an area, particularly those that depend on seasonal tourism business;
- provides the opportunity for adverse publicity; and,
- has negative impact on the province's tourism industry.

DISCUSSION

The BCFS is proposing a three-phase Forest-Use Restriction Order with extensive local input and improved District Fire Management Plans (DFMP).

Under this proposal, recreational and forest industrial operations may continue in selected areas of each forest district, except in the most severe fire situations.

This system will restrict activities on a site-specific basis.

Depending on the fire season's severity, specific areas in a forest district may remain open to the public. It would no longer be necessary for the Minister to declare a complete forest closure, except in an extreme situation.

While changes in procedures, policies and regulations will be needed, no amendments to the Forest Act will be required.

SUGGESTED CHANGES

This is the proposed form of Forest-Use Restriction Orders:

1. Forest Closure Zones and Subzones

- (a) Forest closure zones, compatible with each forest district boundary, would be created.
- (b) Subzones within each forest district would be identified in the forest district fire management plan.

2. Campfire Suspension Order

The District Manager would implement this order based on a pre-determined prescription in the DFMP.

Exemptions to the order would be through permits or through a subzone exclusion in the order, as defined by the DFMP.

Benefits:

- the implementation will be site specific; and,
- there would be better chances for areas to remain open to recreationists, resulting in greater public acceptance of fire-prevention measures.

3. Restricted Travel Order

This order would apply to a specific area or subzone, as identified in the DFMP.

The District Manager would:

- implement the order based on the DFMP's criteria.
- issue exemptions by permit under the DFMP's constraints.

Benefits:

- continuous operation of industries, which are a minimal threat to fire starts, and tourist-related businesses, thus ensuring the area's economic well-being;
- fire-fighting resources would remain in the area;
- implementation and rescinding of orders would be expedited;
- adverse publicity would be minimized;

- only areas subjected to unacceptable danger will be closed, resulting in increased co-operation from industry and the public;
- closer working relationship between BCFS and the industry;
- greater credibility for BCFS staff;
- no significant increase in costs of special patrols; and
- the public would be directed to low-risk areas, maintaining continued recreation potential.

4. Complete Forest-Use Restriction Order

This order would be implemented only under the most extreme situation.

The Minister will issue the order covering a specific area (i.e. forest district, region, or portion of either).

NOTE: There would be no change from the present system for this order.

REQUIRED LEGISLATION AND POLICY CHANGES

1. Sec. 115, Forest Act, would not be amended. However, District Managers would need authority to carry out all Forest-Use Restriction Orders within the boundaries of their DFMP approved by the Regional Manager.
2. Part 12 (2) B and C, Fire Prevention Regulations, may require the addition of these words: "as approved in a District Fire Management Plan."
3. BCFS policies will require amendments to conform with the recommended changes.
4. Fire Management Plans:
 - A provincial format would be developed to enable district procedures to be flexible and specific to varied terrain, climate, access, fuel types, etc.
 - DFMP's would be approved by the Regional Manager and would form the basis for Regional Fire Management Plans (RFMP). All would be developed to achieve Timber Supply Areas strategies and priorities.
 - RFMP's would be reviewed by the Protection Branch. The Director, Forest Protection, would then recommend approval by the Chief Forester.

SUMMARY

The BCFS wishes to update its methodology and implementation of Forest-Use Restriction Orders. It wishes to implement the changes before the 1987 fire season.

Written submissions from interested individuals on the proposals made in this discussion paper should therefore be submitted before February 26, 1987, to:

Director, Forest Protection Branch
Ministry of Forests and Lands
1450 Government Street
Victoria, B.C.
V8W 3E7

For more information, contact: Colin Effa, Technician
Protection Branch
Phone: 387-8713 (Victoria)



Province of
British Columbia

NEWS RELEASE

MINISTRY OF FORESTS AND LANDS
HON. JACK J. KEMPF, MINISTER

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

1987:10

February 4, 1987

VIEWS SOUGHT ON CHANGES TO FOREST-USE RESTRICTION ORDERS

VICTORIA -- Forests and Lands Minister Jack Kempf today released a discussion paper on proposed changes to forest-use restriction orders issued during the fire season and invited the public's comments on the proposals.

"We want to update the forest service's methodology and implementation of these orders because of public attitudes towards them and their impact on the forest industry, tourism and the public," the minister said.

The forest service wants to introduce a three-phase system of orders, he said, which will address fire prevention needs on a more site-specific basis across the province.

The discussion paper details the present system and its problems and proposes that the new system have extensive local input and improved district-level management.

Under the proposal, recreation and forest industrial operations may continue in selected areas of each forest district, except in the most severe fire situations.

The deadline for comments on the discussion paper is Feb. 26, 1987. Submissions should be sent to: The Director, Forest Protection, Ministry of Forests and Lands, 1450 Government Street, Victoria, BC V8W 3E7.

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Contact: Colin Effa, Technician
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LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
VICTORIA, B.C.